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## Red Brigades and the CIA

# All the terrorism isn't manufactured in Moscow

By I. F. Stone

WASHINGTON — A curious remark at the opening hearing of the reborn Senate Internal Security Subcommittee on Terrorism slipped past both the committee and the press, though it came from not one but two of the expert witnesses marshalled to buttress Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr.'s thesis that all the world's terrorisms are masterminded from Moscow. Perhaps so little attention was paid that remark because it was so unexpected. But isn't the unexpected what is supposed to make headlines?

What everybody failed to notice is that at one point in their respective testimonies both Claire Sterling, author of *The Terror Network*, and Michael Ledeen, of Georgetown University's hawkish Center for Strategic Studies, gave the Communist Party of Italy credit for helping to combat the world's most successful terrorists, Italy's Red Brigades.

How does that fit the Haig theory of one vast, simple Red plot? No one asked the question. The subcommittee, which seems ready to see KGB agents everywhere, especially in the CIA and the press, should at least have paused to wonder whether its prize witness panel had also been infiltrated to generate counter-productive headlines like, "Italian Reds Credited With Helping to Combat Red Terrorists." What could be more, as Haig might say, "disinforming?"

If the subcommittee had stopped to ask, it might have learned something even more discomfiting. "The real enemy," at whom the terrorist Red Brigades aimed, was not the ruling Christian Democrats but the leadership of the Italian Communist Party.

This quotation and this information may be found at page 212 of Sterling's book (though not in the sanitized and hyped-up version being distributed world-wide in the May issue of *Reader's Digest*).

Had the subcommittee pressed Sterling, it might have found out something even more surprising. It could have learned as readers of her book do but those of the *Reader's Digest* version do not that in the kidnapping and murder of the Christian Democratic Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, in 1978, the number one exploit of the Red Brigades, they were in a way allied with the CIA and the U.S. government. Both the Red Brigades and the CIA wanted Moro out of the way.

This is well understood in Italy, where Sterling has lived and worked as a journalist during the last 30 years. But it is still news here, though perhaps news "unfit to print," for one also will not find it in the hyped-up "adaptation" from her book published by the New York Times Sunday Magazine last March 1. There, too, the cloth was cut to fit Haig's nightmarish thesis.

Sterling's book was, even in its original form, wildly overstated and sensationalized. But it's not as simplistic as these two truncated versions in the Times and *Reader's Digest*. The section on Italy is the best. There, on pages 286-7 of the book, Sterling reports that, when the Italian government appealed to the CIA for help in finding Prime Minister Moro before the terrorists killed him, the CIA refused.

Sterling writes that, when she questioned the head of the State Department's Office to Combat Terrorism about the CIA's refusal to cooperate, he "wholly agreed" with the CIA and "the CIA refused to discuss it when I asked. Plainly this was the White House policy — or it was simply following Presidential orders." The President then was Jimmy Carter.

There is an obvious explanation for this curious convergence between the Red Brigade terrorists and U.S. government policy; Moro was kidnapped on his way to the Italian Parliament to announce the formation of a new Christian Democratic government with explicit support for the first time of the Communist Party.

For the Red Brigades, that spelled the abandonment of revolutionary aims. For Italian rightists and the U.S. government, it looked sinister — the beginning of a Popular Front coalition between the progressive wing of the Christian Democrats and a united left, both socialist and communist.

The terrorists of the ultra-left and the leaders of the Italian right were united in their desire to block such an experiment in orderly reform. And if the Red Brigades had not killed Moro, the United States might very well have unleashed CIA dirty tricks against his government.

The meaning of the whole affair lies deeper than the paranoid melodrama being peddled by Reagan and Haig. Marx and Engels were wrong when they predicted that capitalism would so impoverish the masses as to push the overwhelming majority into the proletariat. The proletariat in their sense has turned out to be a minority, not a majority, in the industrialized countries. A new middle class and a new stratum of well-paid workers has emerged.

The only way to get a majority for orderly social reform is to unite the progressive elements of the new and old middle classes with the workers. Anti-fascist Italian Catholics in the '20s, like the young priest who later became Pope John, saw this as the way to block fascism. So did a far-sighted general like Chancellor von Schieffer in the Germany of the early '30s in his tragically-foiled effort to block Hitler with a patriotic common front. But the left then was too slow to respond, and too divided.

Now, again, the moderates on both sides in Italy see such collaboration as the one sure way to prevent a resurgence of fascism or a military dictatorship. But in Italy, as in Spain and West Germany, today the crazies of the ultra-left, like blind Samsons, would rather tear down the pillars of civilization.

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